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SUBURBAN LODGING-HUNTING.

Nobody who has not endeavoured to obtain country lodgings in the neighbourhood of London in the early summer, can have any idea of the magnitude of the metropolitan exodus at that season; how the inhabitants of this vast city—who are supposed not to leave it *en masse* till August—over-run every green field like locusts, and make their habitation wherever there are trees, or streams, or even fresh air. For years we had been content to wait for autumn to take our holiday with the rest of the world (as we then thought), by the sea-side, or far away among the lakes and mountains; but as one of the family unhappily exhibited signs of delicacy this spring, and immediate change of air and scene was recommended, Paterfamilias received instructions from head-quarters to procure the same forthwith.

‘We need not all go from home, my dear; three bedrooms and a sitting-room in some pleasant country place, close to town, so that you can come up every day to your literary work, will be all the accommodation we shall require. Only be sure that it is quite in the country; and let there be a nice view from the sitting-room and our little invalid’s bedroom, at all events; and, if possible, either a Park, such as Richmond or Bushey, near at hand; or if not that, the river.’

I am gentle and acquiescent by nature, and should have responded: ‘Yes, dear,’ to the higher power under any circumstances; but in the present case I saw no cause for hesitation whatever. I would just run down the next day—which luckily happened to be a Saturday, and a half-holiday with me—to Hampton Court, and procure some nice airy lodgings close to the Palace Gardens—which would be the very place for our little sufferer (who had not much the matter with her, after all) to sit and pass the livelong summer day in. There would be plenty of trains to Hampton Court, said the prophet Bradshaw, so that there could be no sort of difficulty about it.

There were certainly plenty of trains, but what was not so pleasant, there were also plenty of people

in them; and if I had not seen a vast number get out at every intermediate stopping-place, I should have said that they had all been going to Hampton Court. Such a crowd emerged at that diminutive station, such a procession bore me along with it therefrom upon its festive tide, that I began to think that I had unwittingly hit upon some special holiday in the calendar of the People—an earlier Whitsun Monday.

Upon learning that this flood of people swept over the suburban villages every Saturday, as also upon Sundays and Mondays, it struck me that the ‘complete repose’ of which I had come in search, could only be reckoned upon for four days certain; but it would not be necessary to dwell upon that at home. ‘Do not let us have any disappointments, James,’ had been my wife’s final injunction, and I made up my mind not to be the bearer of evil tidings. As to lodgings, however, there was this little difficulty at starting, that there was not a single card with ‘Apartments Furnished’ to be seen in all the place. There were several nice houses (and a good many not so nice), but one could scarcely ring at a garden gate—and the garden was indispensable—and demand lodgings whether the proprietor let them or not. I was, however, compelled to adopt this course; the only result of which was a severe cross-examination, by a suspicious domestic, who kept the iron bars between myself and her master’s property, and strongly recommended me to make inquiries in the proper quarter before disturbing gentlefolk’s servants for nothing—and especially at meal-times—again.

When I ventured to ask to be directed more explicitly to ‘the proper quarter,’ she replied viciously: ‘Try the baker’s,’ and disappeared ‘up centre,’ as they say upon the stage, through (if one might judge by the bang) an unmistakably ‘practicable door.’

At the baker’s they ‘regretted to say’ that their own spare apartments (as if I wanted to put my family into an oven) had been bespoke for about five months; but that in that very desirable row of houses, each with a private entrance into the Park—

'You don't mean *those*,' interrupted I with apprehension. Yes, they did mean those; and sought after, they would have me to know, by the best of quality.

It is unnecessary to argue the matter in these pages, since the tenements in question, whether occupied by peers or commoners, were at all events all 'let' for the season, which seemed to have begun somewhere about the end of April; there were still, I was informed, exactly the apartments I required at a most respectable undertaker's, but as that was not the sort of woodpecker whose song was likely to soothe the ear of a delicate invalid, I spared myself the pains of looking at them. Even the hotels were drawn blank: one had all its rooms engaged by wealthy emigrants from town for months in advance; and another, I was informed civilly enough, did no 'family business.' House-room was not to be got for money at Hampton Court—for, under the circumstances, and only needing the accommodation for a little while, I would have paid almost any price for it—and back I came to London, rather disabused of the notion that it was 'the easiest thing in the world' to get suburban lodgings.

However, coming out of church next day, I met Preesy of the Foreign Office, who knows everything both at home and abroad, and he was good enough to inform me that he had thought me too sensible a fellow to go to such a place as what he called 'the Court' at all. Hampton was charming, and everything that could be desired, but nobody, except the pauper nobility, ever dreamt of getting lodgings at Hampton Court. To Hampton, therefore, upon the ensuing Monday, I resolved to go. The very name of the railway that led thither was a sort of pastoral poem, and redolent of country delight: the line of the *Thames Valley*; and what was also charming, a literary friend (Welsh), called Pen Yoline, offered to accompany me. The fact was, that I asked him to do so as a personal favour, for I was rather cast down by my late excursion and its result, and especially because everybody (except Preesy) would have it that there must have been plenty of charming lodgings if I had only known—i.e., had the common sense—where to look for them. Now, Pen Yoline and I being in the same way of business, had so much to talk about that we did not much mark the flight of Stations, albeit the road was strange to both of us, and not until a longer stoppage than usual attracted our attention did we think of popping our heads out of window and observing: 'Hi, porter, how far are we from Hampton?' 'Two stations back, gents,' responded the official; 'this here is the terminus Shepperton.' And it was so.

A cornfield in embryo; a field of pease, neither sweet nor green, but what in maturity are known, I believe, as split pease; several trees not disposed for effect; and a one-horse fly (engaged), constituted all the visible attractions of this dreadful locality. Upon the other hand, one could get away from it every hour or so, and we took advantage of this as soon as we could. Resolute to avoid the engrossing topic of literature, we managed upon the return-journey to emerge at Hampton. An uncompromising house-agent, to whom we soon applied for information, at once assured us that there were no

lodgings to be got in the place, save an unfurnished house, to be taken on a lease for ninety-nine years;* but 'over the river' there was every probability of our getting what we desired. Dear me, had we not tried Moulsey? He looked so pityingly at Pen Yoline and myself that we felt quite humiliated, and muttering our thanks and regrets for having troubled him, we started upon this new pilgrimage. Having crossed the ferry, I looked back upon the inhospitable town, and beheld its blooming gardens, its smooth-shaven lawns, here levelled for *croquet*, here sloping to the river's brim, its trellised arbours, gay with rose and honeysuckle, with a pang of disappointment. How jealously had their high walls shut all these beauties in from us upon the dusty road! 'What would you not give, my friend,' quoth I in a rapture, 'for one of those fairy bowers?'

'Well,' returned Pen Yoline, who, although not without enthusiasm, is accustomed, from his connection with the Press, to measure the expression of it—'I would give ten pounds a week.'

We walked and walked—an exercise for which we have both a very honest dislike—but there was not a house to be seen on our side of the stream. We were beginning to think that 'over the river' must have, in the dialect of Hampton, the same signification as that of 'over the left' in that of the metropolis, when presently we came in sight of a bridge and a village. 'I suppose that is Moulsey,' said Pen; 'and I wish we were there.'

'Why don't you speak?' continued he, irritated by heat and fatigue, and especially by the sight of the innumerable skiffs in which the passengers were loling lazily upon the cushioned seats exactly as he would like to have been doing; 'you that are usually so ready with your tongue, that it is hard to get a word in edgeways, why don't you speak? Why do you stare so fixedly at that bridge? I am sure you ought to know it again.'

'Pen,' said I, grasping his arm with emotion, 'I do know it again; it is the recognition of it which renders me speechless. Somehow or other—by what weird and unnatural fate compelled, I cannot say—but we have got back to Hampton Court.'

Such was the frightful fact: the river divides that hateful village into two parts, and the one part, it appears, is called Moulsey. A nautical person, who gave us this piece of information, added, however, that there were two Moulseys, and that, doubtless, in the more remote of them, hitherto unexplored, I should find exactly the lodgings I wanted. I gave poor Pen, who is particular in his food, some lunch, consisting of red lamb, with black mint sauce, some lettuces, rendered uneatable by something worse than hair-oil, which was called salad dressing, and beer, which he pronounced to be 'not half bad'—a verdict the full meaning of which I did not dare to inquire. Invigorated by this refreshment, we started on our toilsome quest. In every shop we entered we learned that the best of lodgings were 'a little way higher up the road'; but like the mirage, they seemed to retreat as we advanced. At last we learned from a chatty old lady walking in our direction, that Prospect Cottage, upon the first turning to the left, was the very tenement of which I was in search.

'But,' said I, rendered suspicious by these repeated failures, 'is it near a park?'

* We afterwards heard this had the reputation of being haunted.

My informant confessed that she had never 'heard tell as it was.'

Then was it near the river? Yes. 'The garding at the back of the house ran right down to the very bank of it.'

'The Thames is notoriously tortuous,' remarked Pen incredulously, as we toiled onwards; 'but it is a very boomerang of a river if it gets back to Prospect Cottage. We are not, I am sure, within a mile of it.'

'We shall see,' returned I gloomily, and in another minute we had turned the corner, and stood opposite the house in question. It was a butcher's shop! You may think, O married reader, that my knowledge of the character of *Matrifamilias* ought to have here made me retrace my steps at once; that the remembrance of my instructions to secure a pleasing country residence without reference to expense, would have caused me to turn and flee. But so disorganised had I become through repeated failure, and so impressed with the impossibility of getting any suburban accommodation whatever, that I only stood rooted to the spot, and stared at the legs of mutton.

'Nice lodgings,' repeated the chatty old lady, leading the way through quite a little grove of raw meat: 'very nice for the summer months, and much liked by the gentry, I do assure you.'

'By the gentles, she means,' whispered Pen with a shudder. 'Tell her the river is indispensable, and let us escape upon that plea.'

'River?' cried she, catching that familiar word. 'O yes, the garding runs right down to the river. Pray walk in, gentlemen: take care of that sheep's head, sir—and mind the block, for it's a little greasy—a nice little garding, you see, although it's not very extensive; and here's the river—here, sir, here—everybody knows the *Mole*, for that's why the whole town is called Moulsey.'

Here a pleasant-looking female joined us from the house, and respectfully inquired our business.

'We have no lodgings,' said she very civilly; 'and I am much afraid that you will not get what you want in this place at all.'

The chatty old lady who had officiously placed us in this false position had fled. We had trespassed without the slightest warrant into a private garden; and to this day, I am not aware whether Prospect Cottage is ever let in lodgings or not. I shall never go thither to see. We shook the dust—and there was a good deal of it—from our shoes at the railway station, as soon as we could get there, and I mentally registered a vow that the Moulseys and I—no matter under what *alias* they might pass—should never meet again.

I did not meet Preesy of the Foreign Office—fortunately for him—immediately after this expedition; but I met another man of the same sort, who assured me that I should have had no trouble at all about apartments had I gone to Surbiton. Close to the river, a neighbour of two parks, only twenty minutes from London, capital houses, and nobody there—were among the list of the advantages he enumerated with such ease upon his fingers, that I felt quite thankful he had only ten of them. My expectations were not high by this time, but of course there was nothing for it but to go; 'Only mind this, my dear,' said I doggedly, as I left home for the Waterloo Station—if I fail this time, it will be the last: you must be content for trees and stream-scenery with what you can get at Brighton.'

Never doubting that this place by the river-side

was arrived at by the *Thames Valley* line, I drove up to that department of the station. They stick the names of the places over the doors to assist the mothered and the unintelligent.

TWICKENHAM. STOCKWELL. SUNBURY.

Yes, there it was, sure enough; and I got my ticket, and hurried into the train. Just as we were starting from Vauxhall, some impulse which I cannot explain, but which must claim to be allied to Genius, prompted me to ask an official whether I was right for Surbiton. Without replying, he ran forward towards the engine with both his hands thrown appealingly over his head.

'Get out,' screamed he. 'There is not a moment to lose.'

'But for Sunbury?' cried I.

'I thought you said Surbiton,' said he, beginning another system of gesticulation. 'What have you got on your ticket, man?'

'Sunbury,' said I.

'All right,' cried he: 'between Hampton and Shepperton;' and the train began to move.

'It's not right,' returned I wildly; 'I don't wish to go near either of those hateful places. It's Surbiton that I was recommended to come to.' And I climbed rapidly down from the carriage in a state of the greatest excitement.

'He's got my umbrella, hi!' screamed a bald old gentleman, who had sat opposite to me hitherto without uttering a syllable. 'It's all a plan of his to make off with my umbrella;' and, indeed, in my hurry and confusion, I had tucked this old gentleman's gingham under my arm in addition to my own, like a Siamese of rank, for whom a single sword is not sufficient. There was a short but violent struggle, a shrill scream—whether from the engine or myself, I cannot say—and I found myself alone, with the ticket-taker and a porter.

'We'll take care of you, sir,' said they in pitying tones, and as though I were an idiot. 'You stay here quiet, and we'll see you into the proper train when the time comes.'

I submitted with childlike docility, for I felt that I was totally unfitted to take care of myself. Shepperton, Hampton, Sunbury, and Surbiton revolved in my mind like a Catherine-wheel. After forty minutes' contemplative rest in that unexhilarating station, I was forwarded, like a parcel (with a good deal extra to pay), to the desired spot. It is unnecessary—for it would be mere repetition—to describe the total and unmitigated failure to obtain my object that thereupon ensued. Only one circumstance stands out in my memory even as an approximation to the desired end. After inspecting several domiciles, totally inadequate and ill-adapted for my purpose, I came upon a very strongly recommended villa residence, with nothing in it at all. It had certainly garden ground about it—that is, a bare space, suitable for 'rounders'—but its similarity with what I wanted ceased with that single circumstance. There was not even a table in the house, far less a chair or a bed; the walls smelt as if they had been put up the day before yesterday; the bells had not even been hung; but that was of little consequence, inasmuch as there was nobody to answer them. And yet, with an admirable importunity, did that Surbiton proprietor entreat of me to become his immediate tenant. Everything should be comfortable—nay,

luxurious—within twenty-four hours. He would procure a cook, and transform the back-yard into a rose-garden, if I would only take it for a week certain. This indefatigable person accompanied me to the railway station, and I believe I gave him some sort of promise to communicate with him by letter, or otherwise. He will perceive, if he reads this paper, that I have preferred the latter alternative, and if he ever catches me at Surbiton, Surrey, again, I will furnish his five-roomed house for him gratuitously, and in the best style. I have finally bidden adieu to searching the river suburbs for country lodgings, for I might just as well search them for a hippopotamus; and we are gone for shade and steam-scenery, as I threatened, to the Marine Parade, Brighton, Sussex.

THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGHEED,' &c.

CHAPTER XV.—OVER THE BODY.

In the same room where father and son had talked together of parting but a few minutes back, Ralph Clyffard lay upon a little couch, with Raymond kneeling by his side. Another sort of parting than that of which they had spoken was taking place, and the stiffening fingers could not even return the lad's mute pressure in token of farewell. The mighty chest of the Master of Clyffe still rose and fell, but in uneven spasms, as though his gloomy soul was struggling to flit away. Around stood many a serving man and maid, summoned by that mysterious messenger Misfortune, that flies so swift and far, and to whom the night is as the day. Scarce one of them had ever before ventured to intrude upon his privacy, but now they watched him with reverence, but without fear, setting forth upon that journey which rich and poor must alike make. One groom had already been despatched for a doctor, another for a priest; but somehow it was known to all that their lord would never open his proud eyes again. They had been kind eyes, for all their pride—the voice, now hushed for ever, had been a gracious one to all his household. Some honest tears were falling. There had never, at least, been so good a Clyffard as this last.

'Where is my brother Rupert?' asked Raymond huskily.

'I told him what had happened, sir,' returned a domestic respectfully; 'and he threw on his dressing-gown, and started hither as soon as I. He took the passage by my lady's room, meaning to call her by the way— But here is my lady, sir.'

Mrs Clyffard entered very swiftly, with her dress only half fastened and her hair dishevelled, like one suddenly aroused in her preparations for retiring to bed. 'What is the matter?' cried she.

No one answered, but all made way for her; and it was strange to see how all became conscious at once of their relative positions, now that the mistress had arrived. Some even left the room, awakened to the consciousness of having no business there, and fearing sharp rebuke. Quite a great space was left between the half-circle of curious domestics and the couch where the young man was still kneeling by his father's side. Had Raymond spoken against her yet, or had her husband had voice to speak? Had the servants withdrawn thus suddenly at her approach from loathing or from respect?

'What has happened to my own dear husband?' murmured she, falling upon her knees beside his pillow.

'Murder!' returned Raymond under his breath.

She did not hear him so much as see the movement of his lips, but even without that his stern reproachful eyes would have given her the like answer.

'My poor, poor Ralph!' exclaimed the widow—for death was already setting that Blank, which is its signature to our release from all worldly cares, upon the slowly-stiffening face—and am I only here in time to close thine eyes!

'Touch him not!' hissed Raymond fiercely.

'Have you not heard that when a murdered man is touched by the vile hand that slew him, the blood will flow afresh from his drained wounds? Beware, I say! Lay but a finger on his sacred brow, which thou hast helped to wrinkle, and I will take thee by the throat, and proclaim thy crime!'

He had not, then, at present proclaimed it: the precious time this fool had wasted were golden moments to her indeed. An accusation thus delayed was already robbed of half its danger. Why had Raymond spared her?

'For my father's sake,' said the young man, answering through his set teeth her unspoken question, 'I have spared you hitherto: not because I love you—you fair devil—but that I would not the world should know how this great and noble heart was fooled.—Where is Rupert, woman?'

For the first time in her life, Grace Clyffard quailed and shuddered; the concentrated passion with which the young man spoke was terrible to listen to. She was armed at all points to meet Hate and Guile with their own weapons, but not the physical fury which was revealed in the tones of her stepson. She knew that she stood in danger of that awful Something whose shadow was on Rupert Clyffard's face—that if she dared to insult that forehead—already losing its pained look, and growing calm and cold, with her false lips, Raymond would surely rise, and perhaps strangle her. She did not mind what things he might say against her—her chief peril in that respect was past—but she feared his powerful fingers. Once round her throat, they might not part with it again: it may be that she judged him by herself in that; but certainly dark Raymond had a look she well might fear. She had once seen Cyril at the Dene look at her brother Gideon much like that, just ere he strove to tear him limb from limb. She had no leaved weapon, as Gideon had, to beat such an assailant back.

'Away, away, fiend!' muttered her stepson furiously; 'your presence is pollution—your work is done here. That poor abused fond ear can drink in lies no more. Away, I say!'

Mrs Clyffard arose from her knees with as little haste as she dared to use. As she did so, a female servant touched her on the shoulder: 'Mr Rupert is taken very ill, madam. Miss Mildred is with him, and has help, but she bid me tell you as soon as possible. She was coming hither herself, and came upon him lying upon the floor of the passage close by his own door, in a fit or something.'

'Do you hear this new misfortune, Raymond?' sobbed Mrs Clyffard.

'Ay, go you to my brother,' returned the young man sternly.

And as she moved away with anguished but

tearless eyes, and firm, swift tread, the bystanders murmured to one another: 'How wise and strong she is in all this trouble! How dutifully she leaves the beloved dead, for whom she can do no more, to tend the son who was so dear to him!'

'In a fit or something,' soliloquised the Lady of Clyffe, as she hurried to Rupert's room. 'Heaven forbid that I should have frightened the fool to death! My tenure of Clyffe is valueless indeed if it has to be shared by that dark boy yonder; yet even in such a case, I will be revenged upon him. He has missed his turn; but when my turn comes round, look to thyself, Raymond Clyffard! No man shall make me pale as thou hast done, and live to boast of it. I would that Gideon were here, or Cator, or even the poor coward Clement. This Mildred is scarce safe; she serves me, but it is with grudging. If Rupert lives this bout, he must be married to her, mad or sane. If she denies him—let her, too, look to herself. I have not gone so far to turn back now; and though I be alone, I am yet a match for all of them!'

CHAPTER XVI.—THE EXTORTED PROMISE.

Rupert Clyffard was very ill, and near to death; but for his stepmother's cunning hand, which bled him ere the leech could reach the castle, Raymond would surely have been heir of Clyffe; while afterwards the sick man would have sunk had it not been for her niece. Long weeks elapsed before his head could leave the pillow, where it lay calm and patient, while Mildred was in his chamber, and restless, with roving eyes, when she was absent. Her voice revived his failing strength like wine; her hand upon his brow was as the magnetic charm which beckons away all pain, and as the precious drug which dowers the dullest with delicious dreams. It pleased her well to be of service to him; she gave up rest, and exercise, and pleasure beyond words to tell (for might not Raymond now have borne her company all day?), with cheerful readiness. She was glad at heart that she had such opportunities of proving her good-will towards him; she tended him like his own sister; and since she was not his sister, the Lady of Clyffe approved and smiled upon her. Such gentle ministering must, in her aunt's opinion, have, as her own had had, some selfish end; and what end could this be, save one alone? She never called her 'Child' now; it was 'Mildred, love,' or at least 'My pretty Mildred,' whenever she addressed her niece in Rupert's hearing, as though she would have suggested to his mind the very words which he himself should use.

So helpless and enfeebled was poor Rupert at first, that the young girl thought of nothing but his weakness, and how she might conduce to his recovery. But when the colour came back to his cheeks, and some vigour to his limbs, and he could sit up and talk to her, Mildred almost regretted her past kindness. He was grateful to her, of course, but with his expressions of gratitude was mingled something warmer, which she could not affect not to understand, and yet which, in Mrs Clyffard's presence, she dared not utterly reject. Though her aunt felt satisfaction at present with her conduct, the girl well knew that only so much the greater would be her hate and fury when she came to learn the truth: nor was Mildred to blame for this dissimulation. It was not a matter with which 'moral courage' had anything to do. To have confessed: 'I cannot wed Rupert, since I have

pledged my faith to Raymond,' would have been to produce a catastrophe such as she dared not even picture to herself, since its consequences would certainly have extended to her lover. She feared, with reason, for his very life; and so the poor girl temporised, only too well aware of the passion with which Rupert was consumed; yet trusting that the flame would never gain such head but that her 'No' at last might quench it, or at all events procrastinate, as before, the evil day. The young man's illness, while it weakened his physical strength, seemed to have healed his mental malady. There was nothing now to inspire her with apprehension in his look *beside* its love, and if returning reason had been indeed vouchsafed him, surely, with his natural generosity to second it, he would withdraw—when her dread hour of confession came—from his unwelcome suit. Something like this she framed to comfort herself with; but it scarcely fulfilled its office. She could not always forget how insecure was the foundation of this hopeful faith; for not only might Rupert's seeming calmness be untrustworthy, even as matters were, but a revelation was at present withheld from him, which was likely to try it sorely. He had not as yet been told of his father's death. When given to understand that he was ill, he had received the information with quiet sorrow, but without surprise. 'I know it,' said he calmly, evidently with reference to the immediate cause of his own ailment, all allusion to which was of course avoided. He meant to say that he had seen the herald of Calamity in the Fair Lady of Clyffe, and was prepared for domestic misfortune. Still, it was strange that he never asked after his father—laid long since by the side of the Clyffards, mad and sane, in the chapel vault—nor remarked upon the sable suits of all around him. This was not, however, because he had not observed them. One morning, Mrs Clyffard, doubtless by design, having left the room, and the sick man and Mildred being alone together, he addressed her thus. It was the first day he was well enough to leave his bed, and that only for a sofa. 'How soon, think you, after a man has died, may his son marry, Mildred?'

She was in the act of handing him a cup of broth, and her tremulous fingers almost refused their office, as she listened to his words.

'How soon, Mildred?' said he again.

'That is a question, Rupert, which I cannot answer. It depends upon the love that the son bore his father.'

'I am thinking of one who would have loved his father well, if there had been room within his heart; but there was no room. There was space for nothing there but love for the girl who was to be his wife.—You tremble, dearest, pretty fluttering dove. How soon, how soon, sweet heart?' His languid eyes looked on her earnestly, but without a trace of doubt, as one who in an orchard watches for the ripe fruit to fall between his palms while another shakes the tree. 'What sweet Revenge thou hast taken on thyself, for thy pretence of cruel hardness, in this long kind tendance: to be my nurse before thou art my bride—that is rare indeed. I will not think that Pain itself could shadow that fair brow, or shrink that dimpled cheek; but if it ever doth, my Mildred, I will wait upon thee, day and night, counting all toil as pleasure, all weariness as blissful rest; and while thou hast strength to smile, be overpaid indeed. Smile on me now, and seat thee by my

side ; for as some eastern king delights in hearing his own greatness proclaimed to his own ear, so yearn I, Mildred, to hear thee say : " I love thee," although none knows thou dost so well as I ! His nerveless hand closed on one glossy curl, and carried it to his lips : while, lapped no less in the sweet assurance of reciprocated love than in the calm content that comes to the recovering frame long racked by sickness, he waited for her answer.

" Rupert," said she, " I thought that the last time we spoke of—the last time, that is, this subject was touched upon by you, we agreed to wait a while before it was resumed. When I then said : " You are still very young, Rupert," I did not mean too young by weeks or even months, but years."

" Am I so young, dear girl ?" said he, with a tender smile. " I thank Heaven for it. There will be then more time in which to shew my love to thee. How happy shall we be together, and how long ! Youth is sweet—ah me, how sweet it is ; and after youth, there is the Prime ; and then beyond the Prime is that which I have read is best of all—the calm content of tried and faithful love ; two hearts bound up in one, with joys, regrets, and memories in common. My Bud—my full-bloomed Flower—my Rose, whose faded leaves (if thou *canst* fade) shall be odorous and precious to the end, ah, how I love thee !"

Mildred's heart sank within her. If she had been his wedded wife already, the young man could scarcely have uttered these words with a more settled faith.

" Why speak of this, which we were not to speak of, Rupert ?"

" Because, sweet, there is no longer any reason for keeping silence. I am the Master of Clyffe now, and there is none to say me " nay," when I say " yea." Moreover, I have learned that my good father gave his consent in private to our union, so the very dead will smile upon our nuptials ; while your Aunt Grace—Nay, then, I will not mention her, since you dislike her, but she has been a trusty friend to me, Mildred. When the light of love was low within my cheerless heart, she fanned its embers with encouragement ; not that she knew why they were so faint and pale ; not that she guessed the secret—Ah, you have not forgotten it, I see. I hoped you had, Mildred. There is no need to remember it any more. By thee, fair saint, that demon has been exorcised, I hope."

His voice, so confident hitherto, though low and weak, here wavered and broke off. His hand, which he would have carried to his forehead, failed by the way, and sank down, as it happened, upon hers ; then straightway, as though revived, Antæus-like, by that sweet contact, he spoke again. " She bade me woo thee, since I loved thee so—that surely was no evil counsel, Mildred ? and when I found thee cold, she bade me press my suit—did she not do well ? 'Twas she that sent thee to me on that morning to her private chamber"—

" I knew it," interrupted the girl gravely ; " and sent thee, too, to Ribble Cave to spy upon thy brother."

" Mildred !"

" Ay, Rupert : she came between Raymond and his own father, and now she would come between Raymond and you. She is the go-between of hate, and not of love ; her offices are evil, and not good. The tender mercies of the Wicked, Rue, are cruel."

" She is not cruel to me, Mildred, but kind," returned the young man ; " and strange it is that, though she stands not in thy favour, it is for thy sake only that she stands in mine. For *her* I have no more liking than the sailor hath for the biting north wind, whose favouring gale is bearing him to the wished-for haven. She would wreck me, an it suited her purpose, I doubt not ; but since her interest and my happiness are fellow-passengers"—

" Be not so sure of that, Rupert Clyffard," broke in Mildred earnestly. " Beware lest there is no pleasant shore awaiting you, no isles of Paradise—beware rather lest she is driving you on the rocks. If she has represented what poor tendance I have paid you in this sickness in any other light than that of sisterly affection and good-will—if she has dared, whether by hint, or by outspoken word, to plight my troth to yours, to proxy-wed me, then has she deceived both me and you—nay, more, if she has ever told you that I love you, she has *lied* !" Her tone, which had been vehement and almost fierce, here melted into pity, as she added : " Rupert, I love you not !"

Stupified amazement, wretchedness, despair, took each the other's place on Rupert's features as the girl went on ; when she had finished, he lay with his white face blank, as though life and passion had left it together. Seriously alarmed, Mildred seized his cold hand, and strove to warm it in her palms ; the charm of her touch still worked ; the lifeblood which had ebbed from his very lips, flowed slowly back ; and in the rayless eyes a fierce and lurid light began to kindle. Twice his parched tongue essayed to utter something, but she could not catch its meaning : the third time he spoke plain. " Send me the traitress hither. Let her take thy place, and lean above me with her lying smile. I want to whisper something in her ear. Send me that woman hither."

" Hush, hush ! I hear her coming, Rue ; be calm."

" Calm ! with those words of doom still ringing in my ears ? Calm—ay ; as the tropic sea is calm, beneath whose waveless face the shark awaits the swimmer. Give her thy chair, Mildred—thou who lovest me not."

" You will not tell her, Rupert ; that would be base indeed."

" Tell her—ay ; just one whisper in her ear. Then, afterwards, you may tell her what you like. I have got some news for her to take to Pluto."

" Dear Rupert, for my sake, do her no harm," pleaded Mildred in an agony of terror. " When I said I loved you not, I meant, not *yet* !"

Revenge and Cunning, which had held divided sway in the sick man's face, here abdicated together ; Hope for one moment sat there like a sun, and then was succeeded by Suspicion.

" I do not believe thee, Mildred Leigh," answered he fiercely ; " nor will, unless thou swear'st it !"

" Swear'st it ?" echoed Mrs Clyffard, entering the room. " Heyday, but I must look to this ! My Mildred put upon her oath ! When I was young, it was the man who swore, whereby, if troth was broken, he was perjured, but the lady was held blameless. There is no such courtesy in these days. Shame upon you, Rue !"

She stood beside the two, with one small hand on either's shoulder.

" It is not I who am to blame," said Rupert hoarsely. " Fair mother, wilt thou not sit ?"

'Nay,' returned Mildred hastily; 'you have not taken your broth yet. Let me tend you a little longer; Mrs Clyffard has been your nurse all day.'

'So, so,' said the lady of Clyffe with a silver laugh; 'this is pushing us from our stools indeed! You tell me frankly what I am to expect, when Clyffe shall change its mistress. It was not troth that you were plighting, then? The question was, "How soon?" Am I not right, dear Rupert?'

'Ay, I asked her that.'

'And what was the reply?' quoth Mrs Clyffard, pressing her hand with meaning against Mildred's shuddering flesh. 'A month? I guessed it was a month. Come; since my modest Mildred will not answer thee, I will answer for her. In a month, she shall be thine, Rupert.'

'I must hear it from her own lips, good mother; thine prophecy too smoothly.'

Mrs Clyffard's fair face darkened; matters were not, then, as they had seemed. Mildred had refused him, or procrastinated at least. The young girl's face was buried in her hands, but not to hide its blushes; it was as pale as marble.

Grace Clyffard's soft voice hardened; it was music, still but clear, incisive, as the clash of cymbals. 'I do not pretend to be a prophet, Rupert; you wrong me there; but what I *promise*—that will come to pass. My niece shall be your wife; and as for her scruples about time, that is a maiden's way.'

'From her own lips, I say,' repeated Rupert hoarsely.

'Swear then, niece Mildred—I pray thee, find thy voice—to wed the Clyffard within thirty days.'

Never was deadly menace clothed so fair; never did spoken words convey more cruel meaning than was shot from those azure eyes.

Fear for Raymond's safety threatened, as it seemed to her, in every tone of her aunt's voice; fear on her own account, which always overwhelmed her when brought face to face with Mrs Clyffard; pity for Rupert, and terror as to what violence he might commit upon the instant, if she should answer 'No'—for she had read Murder in his eyes a while ago—overcame the resolution which had hitherto supported Mildred. Keeping her face still covered, and murmuring a 'God forgive me' to herself, she answered solemnly: 'I swear.'

'Swear what?' asked Mrs Clyffard pitilessly.

'I swear to marry your stepson within thirty days.'

HURRICANES.

GIROLAMO BENZONI, the Milanese, who, in 1541, left his native country to visit the newly-discovered West Indies, and the account of whose travels is extant, tells us that while he was in the Isla Española (San Domingo) 'a heavy misfortune occurred, deserving of serious consideration. Some insisted that the great Enemy of mankind, seeing so many souls rescued from his power by holy baptism, had contrived all this destruction; others thought that it was a warning of the discord and rebellions that were to follow on account of the riches; and it was a general opinion that the erection of the holy ensign of the cross in these islands was driving away the infernal spirits, who had been so long masters of those rough and ignorant men, and that they made all this disturbance in their forced flight. From the eastward there came a tremendous storm,

such as those islanders had never before seen; some winds arose, and one especially, called by the Spaniards *Puracano*, which came with such violence that it imposed terror both on heaven and earth, and seemed as if it would destroy both; wherefore, everybody felt sure they should die, and that the elements would be confounded and resolved, and so end the world. The lightnings of the air were violent and frequent, the thunder was loud and frightful, the day seemed night, and the darkness so intense that men could not see each other. You would find the people frightened and stupified, and out of their minds, running about without knowing where they were; and so raging were the winds that they fought together screaming, they tore up the trees, they detached stones from the sides of the mountains, and with great fury hurled them into the plains; levelling houses, killing men; and even whole houses, with their inhabitants in them, were carried through the air, and then smashed! So that the howling of the people was heard everywhere, melancholy and doleful: thus, in a few hours, extreme injury was done; even three ships that were in a very safe port, tore up their heavy anchors, broke their new strong cables, and were sunk with all their crews who were on board. Many Indians saved themselves in certain caverns: and when they came out again, were so alarmed and confused by the novelty of the case, that they could scarcely breathe, their speech was restricted, and their voice gone. When somewhat recovered, these islanders began to reason with each other, and had very different opinions from what the Christians entertained; for they imputed all the mischief that had happened to the conduct of the Spaniards, and believed that Heaven wished to have forced them away from them; but whether it was this or any other cause, I shall leave to the judgment of the more learned, and to intellects more worthy than either mine or those of the Indians.'

Such is the account given by this modest Italian of the hurricane which he encountered in Isla Española, and it is substantially an account of all the hurricanes that have been encountered since. One hurricane differs from another in fierceness, and the details of one may vary from those of another, according to the accidents of time, and the places where these Air Jötuns (Wind Giants) choose to disport themselves; but the main features are identical—the rising in the east, the devastating fury, the irresistible force. The causes alleged both by Spaniards and Indians, are not, however, so unexceptionable as the description. Benzoni himself does not appear to have been satisfied with them, but, unable to furnish better, 'left it to the judgment of the more learned' to assign a cause for the fact which he witnessed. Though reading by the light of his and many others' experience, the 'more learned,' even of the nineteenth century, have hitherto suspended their judgment as to the precise causes of these terrible storms. To this hour, scientific men are not ready with any unanimous opinion upon the source and origin of them, but they feel competent, at all events, to say, that if their theories on the subject are erroneous, those of Benzoni's Spaniards and Indians are no less so; while they are prepared with such information as to the form, course, velocity, and other qualities of the hurricanes, as enables them to lay down a law, by following which, man may literally 'ride on the whirlwind,' though he may not be able to 'direct the storm.' So far, then, is the nineteenth century

ahead of the sixteenth. It is proposed in this article briefly to set forth some of the information which Science has obtained respecting the laws which hurricanes have to obey, together with a few remarks upon the hurricanes themselves.

The word 'hurricane,' strictly applied, is the name given to a violent, circle-going wind, which occasionally sweeps a portion of the Western Atlantic. Its kindred wind in the eastern seas is called typhoon, or 'cyclone'; and the lesser members of its family are known by the names of whirlwind, water-spout, land-spout, sand-pillar, tornado, white squall, pampero, devils, &c. These all seem to be governed by the same laws, and to be so many different manifestations of the same power exercising itself in different fashion, according to the place where it chooses to put forth its strength.

It was for a long time thought that hurricanes were powerful winds which swept in a straight course along a certain track, which observation had shewn to be nearly always used by them—that the wind, so to speak, made a lane in the atmosphere, down which it rushed headlong at enormous speed, without turning to right or left, until it had attained a certain degree of latitude, where its effects were dissipated by the land, by the spending of its own strength, the resistance of counter-winds, and other like causes. It was known that it generally began from the eastward, or from some point south of east, and the general tale of woe and desolation which certain islands had to tell immediately after its passage, enabled men to know the direction which it commonly took. But its proper characteristic, its true form and nature, its actual course, the whence it came, and the whither it went, were not known, and therefore could not be worked with for the benefit of navigation, till Mr Redfield of New York and Colonel Reid of the Royal Engineers devoted themselves to the study of the hurricane, and learned those facts, for the knowledge of which all who sail the sea owe them a vast debt of gratitude.

For the course which any particular hurricane took, numbers of logs of ships that were situated within certain degrees of latitude and longitude about the time when the storm raged, were diligently overhauled, the observations as to wind, direction of the sea, the readings of instruments, and the state of the weather generally, were carefully noted; and so a tally was put upon the wind, by which its circuit was precisely ascertained. Accounts of disasters, both on land and sea, were closely investigated; the direction of the wind in different places subject to the hurricane, at a given hour, was inquired, and careful comparisons were instituted between the effects at one spot and the effects at another. In this way a number of data were procured upon which to construct a scientific history of the particular hurricane; and when, on comparing them with the data procured in a similar way, respecting other particular hurricanes, there appeared to be an identity between any of them, conclusions began to be drawn as to the constancy of their occurrence, and a presumption established upon which to frame a law. No pains were spared by the industrious investigators to get corroboration of the facts they elicited; and when the concurrent testimony of many independent observers had clearly established anything, it was taken to be true, and classed among the ascertained facts. Storm-charts were thus constructed, shewing the

limits within which hurricanes had been felt at any given epoch. The tracks of the historical hurricanes, those whose fury had marked them for special mention as calamities, were traced out; and from observation of these and minor storms, a district was enabled to be scored on the map, as the district over which hurricanes might be expected to prevail; while the utter absence of such storms from regions lying adjacent to the visited places, justified the conclusion, that hurricanes prevailed within the ascertained limits only, and not on either side of them.

The same system of analysis, directed to the records of many hurricane years, enabled the inquirers to assign seasons to the hurricanes—in other words, to say which were, and which were not, hurricane months. August, September, and October are the months during which, in the West Indies, these furious storms may be expected, in addition to the other winds the sea is heir to; and during these months, ports which, during the rest of the year, are crowded with the shipping of all nations, are deserted and bare of all save those whom necessity or carelessness suffers to remain. The places which seem to be exempt from hurricanes are the islands of Trinidad, Tobago, and Grenada, the coasts of Guiana and Tierra Firme, the gulfs of Darien, Columbus, and Honduras, and the Bight of Vera Cruz. For the most part, hurricanes seem to commence somewhere to the eastward of the most easterly of the Antilles, Barbadoes; and the greatest range westward that any of the more modern storms have had, was that attained by a hurricane in September 1837, which got as far west as Matamoras, on the confines of Texas and Mexico; but it is to be observed of this one, that, instead of beginning, as usual, to windward of the Antilles, it took its rise at a point about two and a half degrees of latitude south-by-east of Kingston, Jamaica. The ordinary course of West India hurricanes is from some point ranging between the twelfth and nineteenth degree of north latitude, and the fifty-seventh of west longitude, in a straight course north-westerly till they reach to about the thirtieth degree of north latitude, and between the seventy-fourth and eightieth degree of west longitude. At this region they are deflected in a north-easterly direction, and spend themselves in their endeavours to battle with the prevailing winds of the higher latitudes. The great hurricane in 1848 commenced in thirteen degrees north latitude, swept the northern Antilles and the Virgin Islands, Porto Rico, the northern and eastern portion of San Domingo, the north-eastern part of Cuba, the Bahamas, the east coast of Florida, and made its westernmost point at Nebraska, in the thirty-first degree of north latitude. It then took a north-easterly course, passing just to the southward of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and swept on till it passed, with ever-diminishing force, over Ireland and the west coast of Scotland, from which it hurried away into the Northern Ocean.

This great storm, though it took a larger circuit, had not so large a share of the destroying angel's power as the less extending hurricane of 10th August 1831, the most fatal to life and property that had occurred since the cruel wind that smote the West Indies in 1780. The hurricane of 1831 commenced to the south-east of Barbadoes, over which it swept, destroying in seven hours no less than fourteen hundred and seventy-seven persons, besides thousands of pounds' worth of property—

struck St Lucia, St Vincent, San Domingo, and Cuba, and then going clear of the Tortugas, touched the continent midway between New Orleans and Mobile, losing its force in about latitude thirty-three, a little to the north-east of Natchez. It made its journey of two thousand three hundred miles in six days from the time of leaving Barbadoes. At first, it seems to have travelled at the rate of ten miles an hour, having begun at Barbadoes at midnight on 10th August, and reaching St Vincent, which is seventy-five miles distant, at 7 A.M. next morning. It must have increased its speed after this, till it began to slacken for its final stop, its maximum rate of progress, as it is supposed, being fourteen miles an hour. As a general rule, it may be said that the line of progression of revolving storms is in the Caribbean Sea, north-north-west; on the coast of Florida, north-by-east; and on wind from the coast of Newfoundland, north-east.

In 1831, as on other occasions, it was observed that the wind, instead of being constant from one quarter, shifted round suddenly, after a short lull, to exactly the opposite quarter, and blew for a time with increased fury, attacking houses and trees which survived its first shock on the side opposite to that which in the other had been found too weak to resist. Trees were felled with their heads towards each other, and all by the same storm; a blow was given, as it were, upon the one cheek of the island with the giant's right hand, and before the smart there was over, the other cheek was smitten with the giant's left; and while both sides tingled, the giant passed away to serve others in like fashion. This was inconsistent with the idea that hurricanes made a lane for themselves in the atmosphere, down which they swept, turning neither to left nor right in their straight course for the thirtieth degree of north latitude. Besides, it was not possible to think that a wind whose speed was no more at its maximum than fourteen miles an hour, could produce all the effects which it was evident were results of the hurricane. A greater velocity must be required to do such mischief—something that flew faster than an ordinary breeze, to produce so wide a desolation. Inquiry pursued in this direction elicited that the hurricane was not a plain, straightforward sailing wind, but a wind having two motions, one straight and progressive, the other circular, and confined to the limit of its own circumference. The progressive motion was found to be no greater than that of the general wind prevailing at the time, which, under circumstances so violent as to admit of the presence of hurricanes, might be somewhat faster than its usual rate. The other, circular, motion was computed at upwards of a hundred miles an hour, and was found to make the storm revolve at that rate in one never-varying direction. What seemed to be the shifting of the wind was, in fact, no shifting at all, but only shewed that the storm, having progressed so far in its straightforward course, the island, ship, or whatever else it might be, had passed the axis line, and had come within the influence of another quadrant of the hurricane, where, of course, the wind revolving in its circle must blow in a different direction from that in each of the other quadrants.

It has been said that the storm revolves in one never-varying direction, and this direction in the northern hemisphere is from right to left, in the southern hemisphere from left to right, in each

case contrary to the apparent course of the sun; or, to speak more plainly, a cyclone in the northern half rotates in a direction contrary to that in which the hands of a clock move, while in the southern half it goes, as it were, with the hands. This being so, it stands to reason that the prevailing wind at each of the four great points of the compass will be as follows—namely, at the northern margin, an *easterly* wind; at the western margin, a northerly wind; at the southern margin, a westerly wind; and at the eastern margin, a southerly wind. The intervening points, of course, are affected by winds modified of these, and the whole arrangement reversed will be found to describe the cyclone of the southern hemisphere.

This knowledge enables the commander of a ship to determine two very important points. By simply observing the direction of what he knows to be a cyclone wind, he can ascertain what his position in the hurricane may be, and also how its centre bears from him. If he is struck by a wind at north, he knows that he must be in the western part of the storm, the centre of which must consequently bear east; and so on of the wind at other points of the storm, the rule applicable to storms in both hemispheres being, as Mr W. R. Birt has well enunciated it, that 'the centre of a revolving storm bears eight points from the direction of the wind at the ship, reckoned with the apparent course of the sun.'

With the knowledge of his position in the storm, and of the bearing of its centre from his ship, a commander requires only to know the way in which the wind will haul, to enable him to make such preparations as may be possible to insure the safety of his ship, or even to use the hurricane for the purpose of speeding her along. Now, the axis line at right angles to the path down which the storm is going, may be said to divide the storm into two semicircles, and it is found that in the port or left-hand semicircle the wind veers in a direction opposite to the apparent course of the sun; and in the starboard or right-hand semicircle it hauls with the sun. Of course, on the axis line itself there is no hauling of the wind at all. Then there can be but two winds, the one opposite to the other, according to the part of the axis line on which the ship happens to find herself. Before a ship which has been struck on the axis line by a wind blowing heavily from any given quarter, can be stricken by a wind from the opposite one, she must have experienced an interval, longer or shorter, according to the magnitude of the storm, of almost dead calm; this lasting sometimes for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, over, the ship comes in for the wind prevailing on the opposite part of the line to that in which she was first stricken, and this of necessity, by reason of the revolving character of the storm, must be from the opposite quarter. The lull, the delusive calm which might Sirenise the unwary mariner into the comfortable belief that his troubles were over, and that he was now to find rest after his labour, was but the centre of the hurricane, the storm's eye, as the sailors call it. The storm is passing over him. He has been on one side of it and through its centre; he is now to visit its further side, and encounter peril there before he can get quit of it. But on all other points of the storm's circle the shifts of wind will be gradual; and should a ship be so unfortunate as to get into all four quadrants, a very unlikely thing to happen, and should still

survive, she will experience the fury of the wind from all points of the compass.

A commander having only a slight acquaintance with the law of hurricanes, would, however, be fully able so to manage his ship that she should not be exposed, at all events, to more than the winds of one semicircle; and if his vessel be at all manageable, he ought to sail out of danger, if not use the storm for the purposes of his voyage.

The indications of an approaching hurricane are several and sure. At a distance, the storm may be seen, either ahead or astern, bearing down upon the track which is to be the scene of its exploits. The enormous volumes of vapour which the whirling air within the cyclone, and the external air rushing into it from without collect and keep together, shew like a dense, dark wall resting on the horizon in the direction from which the hurricane is coming. The sky has a lurid, threatening aspect, the atmosphere gets oppressively hot, the clouds are flushed as it were with excitement, and are tinted sometimes of a deep red, sometimes of a dark-olive colour. The sun, moon, and stars shine with a pale sickly light, that merely serves to shew their whereabouts, not to afford the comfort and geniality they are wont to give the world. The sun has even been observed to be of a blue colour, imparting a similar tint to all objects exposed to it. Sir William Reid says that just before the Barbadoes hurricane of 1831, the sun at Bermuda, more than twelve hundred miles distant, was observed to be blue, causing the sails of ships, the walls of houses, the roads, and all light-coloured objects to be blue likewise. This phenomenon is, however, rare; more frequently, the heavenly bodies diminish the light and comfort they can afford to men, and wrapped, as it were, in a mantle of wind, hide their splendour in its folds. As the hurricane approaches, the wind is heard to moan fitfully, and then to roar. On shore, puffs of wind whirling about immediately after a delusive lull, whisk leaves, branches, and other small articles into the air in a most peculiar fashion.

These all are indications more or less immediately preceding the storm of that which is to come; but they are so general, and withal give such scant warning, not allowing time for advantage to be taken of them, that it would not do to rely upon them for more than confirmatory evidence of the previously suspected gale. The barometer is the faithful instrument which indicates, more delicately and earlier than any other sign given, the approach of the storm-king. Formerly, it was the fashion to decry the barometer, as all 'new-fangled things,' like Admiral Fitzroy's life-saving signs, are decried; but sad experience has taught men better, and the seaman's maxim now is, 'He that watches his barometer watches his ship;' and the maxim is true. The parts outside the hurricane are characterised by a high barometer and a sultry atmosphere; and the sensitiveness of the barometer is affected in sufficient time before the advent of the storm itself to allow of preparation against it. If sudden shifts of the mercury from high to low, or *vice versa*, be followed by persistently high and unusual readings, a storm may be expected, and measures taken accordingly. It is usual for those West India ports which are liable to hurricanes to be almost entirely deserted by shipping during the hurricane months; a bustling busy place like Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, for instance, is left without an occupant during the treacherous

season. This, perhaps, is the more prudent, as being the most entirely safe method of caring for the shipping; but seeing that it interferes very considerably with the trade of the island, it might be as well to consider whether shipmasters might not with equal safety trust to the warnings of their instruments; taking heed, immediately there were indications of a suspicious character, to slip their cables, and run for shelter to some known refuge, as Grenada. Steamers, at all events, might try the experiment, after the example set them by a British frigate on the West India station, which, instead of quitting Barbadoes, where she was guard-ship, as was usually done, remained, by order of the commander-in-chief, during the whole of the hurricane season, relying upon the constantly-read indications of the barometer for her safety.

While the first half of a storm is passing over a ship, the barometer will fall; and while the next half passes, the barometer will rise again. The nearer the ship's approach to the centre, the lower will the barometer fall; so that for the purpose of ascertaining a ship's position in the hurricane, this instrument is of the greatest importance. Its fall will indicate the time when danger is nearest, and when it will be absolutely necessary for the ship's safety to lie to; or if she be still able to sail, the rise or fall of the glass will shew whether she is making for safety or for danger. A rising barometer, after a low fall, will shew that the first part of the storm is over. It will not do, when using the barometer as the weather's index in respect of storms, to pay any attention to the readings 'Set Fair,' 'Change,' 'Rain,' and the other summings-up of the state of the atmosphere usually appended to the scales of barometers. They are useless in the storm-region. It is the simple act of the mercury rising or falling that deserves attention, the action of the instrument itself, not the judgment of its maker, that should be carefully noted.

Much is known—thanks to the industry of the few who have done the world so great a service by studying storms—as to the laws which regulate the action of these terrible revolving winds; so much, indeed, as to warrant the laying down of some elementary rules for the guidance of seamen who have to encounter them. But much remains to be learned—the precise causes of them, the intervals between their recurrence, and much more about them, before we may consider ourselves masters of the secrets of the whirlwind. It is only by observations diligently made, and systematically reported, and afterwards carefully digested by competent men, that this knowledge, which is now lacking, can ever be supplied, and that information obtained for the good of all mankind, which will enable those who sail the sea, if not to put a bridle on the monsters of the air, at least to avoid being trampled to death by them; nay, perhaps even to render them subservient to the legitimate purposes of the world's business which is carried on by going to and fro upon the deep. It cannot be too earnestly pressed upon the attention of all commanders of ships, that they may materially help forward this good work by careful and frequent observations of the state of the weather, the signs given by their barometers, shifts of wind, and all other meteorological appearances which they may come across in the course of their voyages. A little trouble in this way—and habit would

render the title of trouble a misnomer—would gather in such a fund of scientific information as in no long time we may reasonably hope would put such tallies on the wind in his circuits, as to enable man to know with advantage both whence the wind cometh and whither it goeth, whenever he heareth the sound thereof in his ears.

THE 'BEWITCHED' FARM.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.—THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

ON arriving at the Grange, we were both reassured to find that the only reason for hoisting the signal of recall was the arrival of the parish constable, who, having heard of the fresh damage, had come up to make further inquiries, and to again offer his assistance, which Treddock, however, did not seem to appraise very highly. We found the rustic official comfortably eating and drinking in the kitchen. He was a little wizened old fellow, and could scarcely have taken a lamb into custody, if it had made any resistance. It appeared that he taught a school down in the village, and had something to do with the church choir and the bell-ringers, as well as being constable. Treddock related what had happened that day, the smashing of the window before light, the finding of the dead sheep, and the subsequent tumble-down of the hay-rick. The constable shook his head, and looked very wise, but he had no suggestion to offer, and seemed quite as perplexed as any of us who were not constables. We went from the kitchen into the stack-yard, and there we found Tom Jackson still on guard, with the water-pipe in hand. Once more all the footprints there, and, subsequently, those at the entrance of the outer yard, were carefully examined, but again no discoveries were made. We then returned into the house, to scrutinise the broken window.

'This was knocked in wi' two blows—one here, an' the other over on that side,' decisively pronounced the constable. It did seem to be so, for the lead had been broken through, as well as the glass shattered in two places, about on the same level, and some eighteen inches apart.

'Nobody heard but one crash,' said Treddock.

'Ah, that may be, that may be,' wisely answered the official, shaking his head; he was not going to relinquish this happy discovery.

'The blows might have been struck together—at once?' I suggested.

'Exactly. That was what I meant,' said the crafty old fellow, his eyes twinkling.

'Then there must be two of them, or else the rascal can use one arm just as well as the other,' remarked Treddock sceptically; and after glancing round, as if to see that his wife was not within hearing, he dolefully added: 'But what about there being no footprints? There was no lime under the window, I know; but nobody could come into the yard, or go out of it, without leaving marks behind them.'

'Well, you see you hadn't got a dog, but I have brought you one,' replied the constable evasively. 'Old Dixon's son Jim, for all the parson says, will keep dogs, an' I've borrowed this one from him till you get another. I turned him into the kennel, an' he seemed to settle down nicely. It's a part bull-breed, so if he pins anybody, he's bound to hock 'em.'

'Thank you; I'm glad you have brought him up,' said Treddock: 'but I can't see that a dog has anything to do with there being no footprints.'

'Mebbe not, mebbe not; only it's clear it was done wi' two blows; an' as they would want their hands for that, they must ha' had feet as well,' chuckled the old man.

Treddock made no answer, but led the way back through the kitchen towards the kennel, where the borrowed dog was snarling viciously at a couple of female servants, who were at a safe distance, reconnoitring this new arrival. He gave voice loudly on our nearer approach; and being big-headed and strong-limbed, as well as noisy and fierce-looking, seemed really promising.

'Why, what is the matter with Bob yonder?' inquired Treddock, as we turned about to leave the kennel, nodding, as he spoke, towards a heavy-heeled cart-horse, then standing backed close up against the wall, in a corner of the yard near to the drinking-trough, his huge head drooping down to his knees.

Bob gave his monstrous head a slight shake as we drew near, and red drops were visibly scattered by the jerk, while the animal's strong frame instantly shivered with a spasm of pain. My friend, his master, at this sight, burst out into a fit of wrath, his indignation at the ill-usage of the patient brute overmastering his other feelings. Inquiries were at once made; but all that could be learned was that, about a quarter of an hour before, Bob, who had been at work in the fields, had been brought up and put into the stable, from whence, it was to be supposed, he had, in the absence of the man while chopping some feed in the loft, wandered out to the trough to drink, and had there been thus brutally maltreated, although nobody appeared to have heard the slightest unusual noise. The water-cistern was close to the wall, and any one, from the top of it, might have reached to the horse with a weapon; but no traces of footmarks could be met with, either on the mossy stones of the wall, or upon the ground outside. Searchers ran to the top of the hill, and hurried off in other quarters, but no one was to be seen. This affair, like all the others, was wrapped in mystery.

'Don't let your missus know till I tell her,' said Treddock, addressing the open-mouthed group. 'Is her mare all right, I wonder?' he asked at a sudden recollection. 'Get some warm water, and bathe Bob;' saying which, he hurried across the yard toward the stables.

In a minute or two, he reappeared, leading a black horse, which arched its neck and pawed the ground in the most dainty manner. We were soon all about it, making close examination. The mare was shaking a little, as if she had been startled; but she was uninjured; and she was a beauty. I had never seen a more perfect animal. Perhaps she was a trifle slight in build; but for a lady's riding, nothing could have been better. Poor Bob, the cart-horse, envious at the general praises we were indulging in, lashed out a hind-leg as he was being led past before being bathed, and made it a very narrow escape from spoiling the mare's beauty and usefulness together by breaking her ribs. This lost him a great deal of sympathy, for the mare was in favour with everybody; but it at least brought back the talk to his case, and to the alarming contingencies to which that last affair

seemed to point. Treddock ordered the man to whom he handed over the mare not to quit the stables until somebody relieved him, and said one of the men must sleep in the loft at night. On his way back to the house, he appealed almost triumphantly to me and the discomfited old constable as to what we thought of this fresh occurrence. I could hint at no explanation; and the legal functionary seemed nearly overwhelmed by the circumstance of its having happened while he was present upon the premises.

The news of poor Bob's ill-treatment was broken as gently as possible to Mrs Treddock, who had been engaged in the house with baby. All her feelings were freshly, and even still more vehemently aroused by this later outrage; and in the end the black mare had to be once more brought out, to quiet its mistress's apprehensions about its safety. Eventually, when the excitement had again toned down a little, it was arranged that the constable should return to the Grange later in the evening, and remain there all night, with a sturdy wagoner for his watch-companion; for Treddock, who had lost his own rest partially on the previous nights, reiterated his intention of taking me to the meet of the hunt next day, and, on that account, would not hear of my 'sitting' up, and also said that he himself must have some sleep, or he should not be fit to follow the hounds. His wife was brave enough to support his plan, and overbore all my objections to the arrangement, saying how unhappy it would make her as well as Treddock, if I did not enjoy myself, now that I had come. She seemed, too, very much pleased that I was going to try her new horse next day. The puzzled old constable shambled away on his visit to the village; and after tea, baby's tranquillising influences again came into play; and we all seemed to settle down into that sort of patient quiet which, I should say, the inhabitants of a beleaguered place, in momentary expectation of being attacked, experience. Early in the evening, the old constable returned, making a rather ostentatious display of a newly-painted staff, to which he appeared to attribute some kind of magical powers. Supper over, quite a party of us, the constable, Treddock, myself, and two or three of the men, made the round of the place, finding all safe. A man was left to sleep in the stable-loft, another in a corn-chamber overlooking the stack-yard; and, as the last proceeding, a burly young fellow, whose strength of muscles was likely to make up, in case of need, for the constable's want of it, was stationed along with that old fellow in the kitchen. I thought the constable looked rather pale, but we left him standing on the hearth, before a blazing fire, pretending to smile confidently, and keeping the rather gaudily-adorned staff in pretty prominent view.

We all retired at an hour earlier than usual, even for the Grange, owing to our intended hunting expedition in the morning. Treddock, upon shewing me to my old-fashioned bedroom, placed a loaded carbine at my bed's head, saying mildly that it was charged only with duck-shot, and as they would be sure to scatter well, I need not be afraid of letting fly with it, in case of any emergency arising. He was himself provided in his chamber, he explained, with a double-barrelled gun, containing full charges of sparrow-shot; but a final allusion he made to the inexplicable absence of footprints on all occasions, intimated that he had

little hope of the mystery being solved, even by means of these formidable preparations. All these matters were so different from the expectations with which I had set out on my journey, that they were considerably disturbing, and I did not sleep well; more than once, I started up, and stared about the moon-lighted chamber, fancying I heard an alarm raised; but they were half-dreamings of mine, and when, at last, I was effectually startled by the presence of Treddock's white figure at the side of my bed, in the gray dawning, he informed me that all was well. On our going down stairs, this happy prognostication was confirmed by the sight of the old constable and the young wagoner peacefully dozing opposite each other, in the blinking light of a neglected night-lamp, the representative of the terrors of the law still having his staff in hand. So far as we could infer, the only alarm they had experienced was that they were then undergoing from our sudden entrance unexpectedly arousing them. A similarly satisfactory report was received from the man in the stable, and also from his fellow in the corn-loft, and a hasty survey of the premises shewed us that all was really safe. The old constable seemed disposed to take the whole of the credit of it to himself, at which Treddock only laughed, and then quite cheerfully conveyed the news up stairs to his wife. One by one, the servants made their appearance, and soon the house was all astir. Breakfast was hurried on, and the horses were ordered to be got ready. The outdoor labourers began to arrive, and all seemed delighted to hear the satisfactory intelligence that no further damage had been done. Inside the house and out was a scene of merry bustle, and I was quite entertained by the novelty of this early-morning picture of rural life. Treddock resolutely refused to don his hunting-garb, because I too could not assume the scarlet; we must keep a bit in the rear of those in uniform, he said, that was all the difference it would make. At length, we were told the horses were ready, and Mrs Treddock's pleasant voice from somewhere at the top of the stairs wished us a good day's sport. It seemed baby had been wakeful during the night, and the maternal eyes needed to close again a little. At the door, we found the horses clamping their bits, and pawing. My friend had a strong bright bay horse, just suited to his weight; and the black mare allotted to me, barring a slight fear I had that she was rather too fresh for my riding, looked in capital trim.

'How is it the dog isn't barking? I have not heard him lately,' said Treddock, suddenly pausing with one foot in the stirrup-iron.

'I heard him when we first went across to the outhouses,' I said.

'So did I; but he is quiet now. He can't have got used to the yard by this time!—Go to the kennel,' he added in a curious tone to the man standing by the horses' heads, and he at the same time shouted for the constable.

'The dog is stiff enough, right at the end o' th' chain,' shouted the pale-faced ploughman, running back from the direction of the kennel.

'I felt sure he was,' said Treddock, turning a white visage to me. 'Constable, the fresh dog is done for!' he continued, as that worthy came blinking up, fresh from before the kitchen fire.

'O no! he canna be; I heard him just now,' the old man incredulously replied, hobbling away towards the kennel. We walked our horses on to

that corner, and there, plainly enough to be seen, the brute lay dead and stark.

'A blow on the head?' asked Treddock, as if foreseeing the answer.

'Why, his skull is smashed! There's a hole I could put my three fingers in!' exclaimed the astounded old man.

'Can you stop at the house with the women while we are away, constable? We shall be back soon after noon,' remarked Treddock.

'But he is quite warm yet,' mechanically said the constable.

'Do you hear me? Can you stop?' shouted Treddock, losing temper.

'Yes, I'll stop,' was the slow answer.

'And let the men keep about the house. Tell 'em to never mind the field-work till I come back, for I'll go now, if every head o' stock on the place was killed. Only let them mind missus and the child.—Come along!' said Treddock to me, his blood fairly up; and leaping into the saddle, he pulled his horse round, and dashed away at a gallop.

'I won't go; we must stop and mind the place ourselves,' I was intending to say, but I only got a word or two of it out. The mare had dropped her head, and gradually approached her nose to the dead dog, and just at that moment she suddenly leaped forward, nearly throwing me, for I had previously mounted. In a sort of frightened rage, she began to beat the poor animal's remains with her fore-feet, and I had great difficulty in keeping my seat.

'She's scared at it,' said the constable. 'Take her away, or she'll throw you.'

'Come!' shouted Treddock's angry voice in the distance. 'If you don't, I'll go myself.'

'He won't come back, I am sure, now as he's said that,' put in the ploughman; and seizing my rein, he struggled, at some risk, to turn the mare away, her excitement still continuing. I brought her to a stand-still some distance away, and beckoned to the constable.

'You keep an eye on the men; that dog has been killed since they began to come; for I heard it when we were having breakfast,' I whispered to him.

'I know, I know,' he vaguely answered, with what he no doubt meant for a sagacious wink; and as the mare again darted forward for the gate, I left him rolling his empty old head about on his shoulders, as if wishful to intimate that he had thought of my hint hours before. I was soon in the lane alongside Treddock, and I urged him to go back; but upon that suggestion he pushed on all the faster, and stubbornly refused to talk at all of this last affair. All that he would say was, that, on the following day, his wife and child should assuredly leave the Grange, until the matter was settled one way or other; adding, that he should never cease regretting how all the pleasure of my visit to him had been spoiled; a conclusion against which I protested strongly, but, as I could easily see, ineffectually.

It would be nothing to the present purpose to describe the fox-hunt. At the cover-side we found a strong muster, and among those present were two or three friends of Treddock, who had heard something of the malicious damage done at his farm. They were profuse alike with their sympathy and their suggestions; but Tom was not very communicative on the subject, and generally shortened the talk under some pretext. After one false scent,

we got well off for a merry run, and afterwards a second fox was started and killed; but on neither occasion did Treddock or I make a respectable finish at the death. He could have done so, if he had chosen to leave me behind, for, shameful to say, I had a tumble in each run; and the most annoying part of it was, that I could not make out how or why they should occur. The black mare went like a bird, and took rasping fences with ease; but suddenly she went down like a shot, just as she landed after topping a wall not more than three feet high; and then, the second time, we had a precisely similar mishap in the middle of an open field, where the grass did not reach to her fetlocks. They were not falls so much as stumbles; that is to say, she did not plunge, but went down with a rocking motion, exactly as they say camels kneel. We both anxiously examined her legs, but she did not seem to turn a hair in the process, and by equal good-luck, I was not so much as bruised; although, the second time, as I was picking myself up, I felt her hot breath on my shoulder, and was startled to find her open jaws within an inch of my face, with a snarling expression, shewing that she had quite lost temper. On both occasions, fortunately, Treddock happened to be almost close by my side, and she did not get loose and away.

'I can't understand it,' he said, the second time, looking very grave. 'You were riding fair enough. I hope she doesn't do that often; and it is a good job Nell was not on her.'

In this way it happened that we both came off with indifferent honour in the hunting-field that day—a matter which again galled Treddock, evidently on my account, not his own. Only for these curious accidents, I should have greatly enjoyed the sport, for it was a beautiful country. Treddock very frequently scrutinised the mare, and when we got into a green lane, as we were riding homewards, made some pretext for changing horses, as if desirous of testing her by his own riding. Things went on well for perhaps a quarter of a mile, when, immediately after we had passed through a gate, and just as Treddock was turning in his saddle to resecure the latch, down went the mare in exactly the old fashion; and being taken unawares, Treddock got a very ugly fall.

'Her knees are broken this time!' he shouted, scrambling up, and rubbing himself as he went back to her. No, there was not a mark on either leg! 'I never saw a horse fall like that before,' he said, staring in fresh wonderment at me.

I said that I never did, for though I had not witnessed the whole process this time, I knew exactly what it was like from my own recent experiences. He remounted, but we had not gone two hundred yards further before precisely the same scene was re-enacted.

'Stop, Treddock!' I shouted, and wheeling my horse round as his animal rose unassisted, I went close up, and with my whip brushed the tips of the mare's ears. I had found out the secret! At the first touch, down she went. She was instantly up again; and I repeated the experiment, with just the same result.

'Why, it is a trick somebody has learned her!' roared Treddock from a half-recumbent position in the middle of the road.

'That is it, certainly, and nothing else,' I answered. 'I was looking, and I saw your whip touch her ears; and then it flashed across me that mine did so when she fell in the field.'

Treddock tried the manoeuvre himself, and as certainly as the whip touched a hair of her ears, so surely the mare rocked forwards, then backwards, then went down, but somehow seemed to recover herself, almost, as it appeared, without touching the ground with her knees.

'I can never trust Nell on her back after this,' groaned Treddock; 'and it is quite a providence that we have found it out. But everything unlucky is coming upon me at once, I think! I fancied I had a splendid bargain. The veterinary-surgeon fellow that had her in his stables was a thief not to tell me of it, and he knew she was for a lady's riding. But he shall hear about it. I'll put my whip away, to make sure I don't touch her unknowingly,' he added, sticking it into his coat-pocket, and watching the mare's ears closely.

Here was another circumstance not to be abruptly communicated to Mrs Treddock, for it seemed she had taken a great fancy to the mare. Tom, however, stated that it would be impossible to break the animal of the trick, now it had once acquired it; and supposing that we found no new disasters at home, he promised the veterinary-surgeon in the neighbouring town, from whom he bought the mare, a lively visit on the morrow, engaging me to accompany him. The creature went right enough so long as her ears were not touched; and at the end of what ought to have been a more pleasant ride, along field-paths, and through country lanes, we safely arrived at the Grange between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs Treddock and all the rest greeted us with bright looks, for there had not been a single mishap, subsequent to the mysterious death of the second dog before we started. As for the old constable, he had quite rallied, and was again in the very finest possible feather, plainly assuming that it was his authoritative presence as the functionary of law and order which had insured this state of safety. Dinner, of course, had been put off, awaiting our return, and we had brought back with us hunters' appetites; but the enjoyment of the meal was rather spoiled by having, in recounting the morning's sport, to evade Mrs Treddock's inquiries for full details as to the behaviour of her mare. I praised the animal's easy going and her fine leaps, but did not mention her falls; and for my reticence, Tom Treddock drank to me with his eyes over the rim of his glass in taking embarrassed draughts of porter.

My friend and I, soon after dinner, made a complete circuit of the farm, and all was found as it should be; the legs of the cows were not broken, no more sheep had been prematurely slaughtered, and poor Bob was still the only horse with a broken head. We rambled on down the lane, past the church, into the village, which I found was a pretty ancient-looking place, and underneath its thatched roofs I could hardly bring myself to believe that malice such as that evidently afoot at the Grange could find a dwelling. Everywhere, as I was proud to see, my friend was received with respect and deference. Some of the older people talked with him about the injuries done at the farm, and all seemed indignant and sympathetic. He had a short interview, by the gable of Dixon senior's cottage, with Dixon the younger, the owner of the bull-dog which that morning had so strangely come to an untimely end; and as the conversation finished, the chink of money passed between them, and the grinning rustic finished by

inquiring whether he should bring his other dog up to the Grange—seeming quite willing that it, too, should be knocked on the head at the same liberal tariff of compensation. Treddock, however, decisively answered in the negative.

'Dogs are of no use when there are no footsteps,' he vaguely said to me, as we strolled away on our return-walk; and it was easy to see that although, in talking with the villagers, he had pretended to believe that it was all over, he still had a secret misgiving that the end of the disasters had not yet been reached. This conviction was clearly brought out, when in our chat on the hearth that night, he suggested to his wife that she and the baby should go away by rail on the following morning to her mother's, some sixty miles away, and should remain there for a few days. Mrs Nelly, however, indignantly scouted the idea of such a thing, when they had a guest in the house; and baby reassuringly crowded defiance at all dangers. The plan seemed to break down at the outset; still, Treddock was not contented. The constable had been set at liberty from further attendance immediately upon our return; but he was determined, he valorously said, to make a finish of the business, and accordingly he himself insisted on remaining at the Grange a second night. The evening wore quietly on, and after supper-time a bed of a make-shift kind was made up for the constable in the kitchen, and again the stable and the corn-loft had each a guardian occupant. Treddock, as gravely as before, brought the yeomanry carbine to my chamber, and then marched off with the other double-barrelled weapon to his own room. The moonlight poured in through the small panes of my window, making a net-work of shadows on the curtains, which I lay admiringly watching for some time; but following the hounds in the morning is not conducive to wakefulness at night, and when I again opened my eyes, though the window was equally bright, I could distinguish that this time the rays were those of the sun. It was rather late in the morning—for the country, I mean; but Treddock had also some arrears of rest to make up, and I had nearly dressed when he looked in at my room-door. The old constable was awaiting us below in the very highest possible condition of self-satisfaction, and was only lingering to receive my friend's congratulations (with something more substantial, I believe, added), before setting off for the village, having, as he confidently intimated, cleared everything up, though, so far as any explanation went, things were really left as much a mystery as ever. Nothing further had occurred; that was all that could be said. But in our content at this, no one was overlogical; all seemed only too anxious to conclude that the strange affair had ended; and everybody indefinitely praised the old man, as if he had really been in some way the cause of it. Chuckling loudly as he went, he took his leave; and Treddock and I, with the lady of the household, who had now joined us, sat down to breakfast in the best of temper. Some ten minutes elapsed, and we were rediscussing the incidents of the hunt of yesterday, when a yelling shout arose just underneath the window near where we sat, and a dirty hand came beating on the casement outside, so fiercely that a diamond pane shivered out of its lead casing, and tinkled as it fell inside. Mrs Treddock gave a scream, and nervously clutched the child to her bosom.

'Hoo, mestur! Hoo, mestur!' cried a lad's

terrified voice, as Treddock flung open the window, 'th' constable is done fur; they've killed him at the back o' the little bean-stack!'

This was awful. Treddock and I rushed out at the front, and made for a couple of bean-stacks which stood in a near corner of the yard, round the east gable, not far from the dog-kennel. Stretched upon the ground, lay the poor old constable, his head and shoulders resting in a little pool of blood, the haggard face turned upwards, looking as though he were quite dead. Upon our raising him, we found that he still breathed, but his injuries were evidently frightful, and most dangerous; and, as had happened in all the other cases, the wounds had been inflicted on the head, and had the appearance of having been done by a blunt weapon. Treddock shouted loudly for some one to bring a chair for the better carrying of the injured man; and in the meantime we supported him in a sitting-posture as well as we could. I noticed that Treddock's eyes were attracted over my shoulder towards some object as we knelt.

'Look there!' he said, in a hollow whisper—'that mare has seen it done! Whoever it is, she knows them. Oh, if she was but a Christian!'

I turned my head, and looked. There was the black mare on the other side of a little low fence, not two yards away, protruding her head over, her nostrils dilating, and her eyes glaring in the wildest fear; while we could see through the pales that the terrified creature trembled in every limb. But the next minute the household was clustering around us; nor was it greatly to be wondered at that the women screamed, and the men turned pale at the ghastly spectacle we carried through their midst. Several of them, scarcely ten minutes before, had seen the old man jauntily set off for home in good health and strength. A servant was instantly despatched on the master's horse for the nearest surgeon, but he unfortunately lived a couple of miles away. We laid the poor constable on the kitchen hearth, propping him with pillows, and tried to stanch the bleeding with cloths.

'Ellen, you and the baby must quit this house at once,' said Treddock, turning his face, now pale enough, towards his wife. 'The place is bewitched, and something will happen to you. Go, and get you ready,' he urged, his voice shaking; 'we shall have the county police here now: knocking human beings on the head is different to killing cows, and sheep, and dogs. If he dies, there'll have to be an inquest held.'

Mrs Treddock hugged her child to her breast, while she bent over the injured man; but she answered that she should not go away, unless Treddock went with her; everybody, she said, had better go, and leave the place to itself. The servants, short as the time was, were already acting upon that conviction; some were bringing boxes down stairs, and one or two had got their bonnets on. This last horrible affair, occurring in broad day, had broken down the courage of everybody, and the whole premises had instantly been thrown into confusion, no one daring to venture now from one room into another alone. Meanwhile, the constable continued to breathe, and more heavily; now and then, he tossed about his arms, but he seemed to be quite unconscious. Very shortly, people came hurrying up from the village, the messenger sent for the doctor having told them the startling news as he passed through. The house was filled with persons quickly. I suggested

that the police should be sent for from the county town, and Treddock assenting, a second messenger was ordered to saddle the black mare, and hurry away on this errand, with a whispered injunction from me, at which he gave me a puzzled stare, not on any account to touch the animal's ears unless he wanted a tumble. The man, a few minutes afterwards, shouted in at the kitchen-door that the mare had got loose in the upper field, and would not let a dozen of them catch her. He was angrily bade to take one of the cart-horses. By and by, though the interval seemed cruelly long, the surgeon arrived, and after a hasty examination, he pronounced that the constable's head was fractured in two places. In answer to a question from Treddock, he said that, as far as he could judge, the blows had been struck with a dull-edged metal instrument. Under the doctor's instructions, the old man was removed to a couch in another room, which could be kept free from intruders; for by this time the crowd had about taken possession of the whole place, neither Treddock nor his wife seeming greatly to object to it. The presence of the crowd appeared to give something like a sense of security, or it at least mitigated the feeling of danger. My big strong friend stood with a pallid face amidst the mob of his male neighbours; and Mrs Treddock, with her frightened child, made another centre for the moaning circle of women. Occasionally, Treddock would turn to me, and, in a mechanical way, express his hope for the arrival of the police; but the mystery was to be explained without their aid, and, as fate would have it, I had a principal part to play in the solution. Treddock, after making another effort, finally succeeded, by the aid of the chorusing women, in persuading his wife to take the child away from the Grange down into the village. She went up stairs for her own bonnet and shawl, and for Master Charlie's hat, and was shortly fully dressed and ready to start. A big servant-girl had the baby in her arms, and after he had received the father's showers of kisses, she set off with him in advance of her mistress, who turned back for another little fit of hysterical sobbing on Treddock's broad shoulder.

'The black mare—the black mare!' was the next moment yelled in a score of terrified voices, and a clatter of hoofs dashed past the front door. 'She has got the child!' next struck on our ears in horror.

Instantly everybody was pouring pell-mell through the doorway, but Tom Treddock's fists, striking right and left in sudden fury, made for himself the foremost way, his poor stark-mad wife, however, keeping a dragging hold of him. But, once outside, everybody came to a sudden standstill; the parents stopped transfixed in wondering terror, like every one else. On the other side of a small pond, just below the house, to the left, and through which she must have rushed, stood the infernal mare, with the child hanging from its jaws, held up by the clothes; and just as we all got sight of her, she ducked her head, and dipped the struggling infant under water, clearly bodily into the pond! Some men who had been hastening towards her, stopped rooted at this manœuvre, and lifting her head, the she-devil stood at bay, white streams of vapour escaping from her nostrils, and her eyes blazing blood-red. With a ringing shriek, Mrs Treddock rushed towards the pond, and Tom followed her, but once more the devilish creature ducked her head, and plunged the child

into the muddy choking water. The mother fell headlong, and the father stiffened where he checked himself, with his big, helpless arms upraised, while everybody else remained motionless, fascinated with horror. One old woman alone had presence of mind, which afterwards shamed all the rest; she rushed back into the house, and a moment later she thrust a gun into my hands, I happening to be nearest. This broke the spell. I ran for the pond, a wild cry going up from every quarter at the sight of my weapon. The hellish eyes of the mare met mine, and again she drooped the child towards the water; but in doing so, she exposed her neck, and I fired for the junction of the shoulder-blade. Although a sort of darkness instantaneously blinded my eyes, I saw through it that the black mare fell at the edge of the water where she had stood, and that the child floated loose, a white speck on the surface of the pond. A moment later, the fiend in hide and hoofs was dead, and the half-drowned infant was rescued, but not an instant too soon. Tom Treddock staggered to me, but in the act of grasping my hand, tumbled into the arms of those about him; the big stout-hearted fellow had swooned, just as his wife had already done, and as I was within the toss of a straw of doing the next moment. What the historic William Tell's sensation must have been, immediately after that famous archery feat, I still do not pretend to know, for Charlie Treddock was no child of mine; but if the bowman on that occasion had happened to be not the father himself, but only a friend of his, I think I have some idea of what his feeling was, and I beg to say that it was not a pleasant one.

Matters were at last cleared up. It was the mare which had done all the mischief, and this last horrid act was only the climax which disclosed the mystery. The men who had been helping to catch her in the field kept on in their efforts after the wagoner gave up, and started upon his errand on another horse; and just as her pursuers had succeeded in driving her towards the house, the servant-girl had gone out of doors with the child. She explained that she had put the infant down to his feet on the ground, where he propped himself against a sunny wall, while she arranged her shawl; and at that instant, the devil-possessed brute swooped him up in her jaws, and carried him off to the pond in the sight of a score of eyes. It was no less clear, strange as it at first seemed, that the mare had done all the rest of the horrible mischief. As she lay there, part in the water and part out, blood-stains, which the water seemed to have freshened into recent patches, were discovered on both the hoofs of her fore-feet. Her iron shoes were unquestionably the instruments which had inflicted the constable's wounds; and they also had beaten out the brains of the dogs, and killed the sheep, and broken the legs of the cow, and bruised the head of Bob the cart-horse. It all grew as plain as daylight, for it was now discovered that, although no human footprints had been discovered near the spots where the strange scenes had occurred, there were always marks of horse-shoes there. Subsequently, I may say, the thing was proved by direct as well as by this inferential evidence—the first words the old constable uttered, eleven days after receiving his injuries, were, that it was the black mare that attacked him immediately after he left the house.

The explanation finally gained, through the

medium of the police, was this, that the black mare had been a 'trick'-horse in a circus, and had been sold by them on account of her malice, having seriously injured several of those who performed with her. She had a knack, it was stated, of untying herself from a halter, and could even unfasten a stable-door. No doubt, she had in that way got loose, and so had had, unknown to all, the run of the premises. How such an infernal spirit could ever come to possess a horse, is a question I shall not attempt to answer. The veterinary-surgeon professed entire ignorance of the matter, and asserted that the mare was only sent down to him from a distance for sale. He, however, thought it consistent with his own interests to return to Treddock the purchase-money he had paid, and also to give the constable a sum of money.

I should have mentioned that the doctor had two patients to attend to at the Grange for several days; Mrs Treddock's brain had, in another way, received a shock nearly as severe as that sustained by the constable. By and by, she recovered, taking much longer time, however, than did Master Charlie to rally from his rough ill-usage. Both parents expressed a firm belief that my visit to the Grange had been owing to providential arrangement, and seemed much to regret that baby had already a godfather. Things very shortly settled down into a quieter state; and after all, I did not return to town before I had had other sport than that of shooting horses, and if the process was less exciting, it was far more pleasant.

The old constable, by the time he had gathered a little strength, had fully persuaded himself that it was he who had hit on the first clue to the mysterious depredator being the mare, from his saying that the house-window, which was smashed in in the early morning, had been broken by two somethings which struck simultaneous blows, for by that, he now asseverated, he distinctly meant to convey the notion of horses' feet!

SHYNESS.

Strong bars that sunder sympathies
Are thoughts whose bashful feet
Dare not approach, because there lies
A shadow of repulse they fear to meet.

As when the moon is low, and mist
Lies glimmering on the streams,
The stranger tries from sounds to list
If yonder bank be the firm ground it seems.

He fears to cross lest fancy's hands
Have sketched false pencillings,
And where he hopes the hamlet stands,
The marshy night close round with cold wet wings.

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